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NEW DELHI — A U.S. panel on religious freedoms has placed India on its watch list of countries where such freedoms are at risk, noting that there has been a "disturbing increase" in violence against minorities in the South Asian country.

The **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom,** an independent congressionally mandated panel that provides recommendations to the government, said in a statement Wednesday that India's response to attacks on Christians in the eastern state of Orissa in 2008 and against Muslims in western Gujarat state in 2002 was "largely inadequate."

The panel had recommended that India be placed on the more serious "countries of particular concern" list after the 2002 riots, but it was removed in 2005.